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# State of Utah Department of Commerce

Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing

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## MEDIA ALERT

### **Utah Department of Commerce, Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing completes national construction fraud sting, nabs unlicensed contractors in St. George and Northern Utah with 45 Citations and \$23K in fines**

*"Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) joined nationwide investigation to target unlicensed and fraudulent activity in northern and southern Utah cities."*

(For immediate release...)

**SALT LAKE CITY, Utah** – The Utah Department of Commerce announced today that the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing completed a two week sting investigation in Northern Utah and Southern Utah locations to target fraudulent construction activity. Utah's undercover investigation was part of a national effort by members of the National Association of State Contractors Licensing Agencies (NASCLA). NASCLA members who participated from June 5-16, 2017 were Arizona, California, Florida, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, and Washington. Utah investigators issued a total of 45 Administrative Citations for unlicensed activity or activity beyond the scope of a license with fines totaling \$23,000 during the undercover operation.

"This year's sting operation targeted northern and southern locations where DOPL investigators saw trouble spots of unlicensed activity. The Division is proud of their achievements in identifying bad actors whose actions harm the public and take away legitimate business from professional licensees," stated Mark B. Steinagel, Director of the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing.

DOPL investigators used Craigslist, online classifieds, field checks, and proactive investigations to snare those selling services that require a professional license. Investigators contacted the companies and individuals to request bids for business projects using a decoy commercial building as bait. Once bids were reviewed and fraud was discovered, investigators issued administrative citations, fines and explained the process for licensure with DOPL to the respondents. The investigative team saw an increase over 2015's sting with 32 citations and a total of \$20K in administrative fines issued for unlawful activity.

### **Consumers Tips on Choosing a Licensed Contractor**

Consumers should be aware that internet bulletin boards and online classified ads may invite deceptive business opportunities. The following tips offer steps to take when seeking a bid for contracting work and how to protect the public from contractor fraud;

- Verify the contractor or business is actively licensed with the state of Utah at [www.dopl.utah.gov](http://www.dopl.utah.gov).
- Always hire a licensed contractor so you have the ability to file a complaint if something goes wrong in the business transaction.
- Request 3 written estimates to compare.
- Check at least 3 references with former customers.
- Check with materials suppliers on which contractors/companies they would recommend.
- Require a written contract to protect yourself and your property against liens.
- Don't make a large down payment; pay as work is completed.
- Monitor the job in progress.
- Don't make the final payment until the job is complete per the terms of your contract.
- Keep copies of all paperwork related to your job.

To file a complaint, verify the license of a professional or check on whether a licensee has faced disciplinary action, consumers may log on; [www.dopl.utah.gov](http://www.dopl.utah.gov) for more information.

More consumer information is also available the Utah Division of Consumer Protection's website at [www.dcp.utah.gov](http://www.dcp.utah.gov).

For more information the National Association of Contracting Licensing Agencies, log onto [www.nascla.org](http://www.nascla.org).

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